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## Congress of the United States House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEES:

MILITARY PERSONNEL

READINESS

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES,

VICE-CHAIR

SUBCOMMITTEES:

NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS, CHAIR

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE UNITED STATES

NATIVE AMERICAN CAUCUS, CO-CHAIR

REGIONAL WHIP

July 21, 2020

The Honorable Mark Takano  
Chairman  
Committee on Veterans Affairs  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Phil Roe  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Veterans Affairs  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Roe,

As one of the first Native American women elected to Congress, Co-Chair of the Native American Caucus, and the daughter of two proud veterans, I thank you for holding this hearing today and for considering my bill H.R. 2791, the Department of Veterans Affairs Tribal Advisory Committee Act of 2019, which I introduced with Rep. Mike Gallagher. H.R. 2791 creates an Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs to provide guidance on matters relating to Indian tribes, tribal organizations and Native American Veterans. [American Indian and Alaskan Natives comprise a remarkably high concentration of the Armed Forces](#), yet they lack adequate representation and support from the government following their service.

A [2015 report](#) conducted by the Department of Veteran Affairs found that American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans have lower personal incomes and are more likely to be unemployed, lack health insurance, and have service connected disabilities than Veterans of other races. They experience homelessness and health disparities at higher rates than other Veterans and face unique challenges when accessing VA services. The creation of the Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs ensures that the Department of Veterans Affairs can better serve and support Native American Veterans to alleviate the disproportionate hardships and barriers that Native American Veterans encounter.

Our country must live up to the promises made to our Veterans in exchange for their service and their lives. The federal government's insufficient response to the disproportionate struggle of Native American Veterans represents not only another broken promise to sovereign tribal governments, but a broken promise to our Veterans. The VA Tribal Advisory Committee Act will facilitate consultation between the VA and tribal governments and organizations, provide a forum for tribes and tribal organizations to discuss proposals for changes to VA regulations, policies and procedures, ensure pressing issues are brought to the attention of tribal organizations early so tribes can share feedback, and advise the Secretary on ways the VA can improve programs and services to better serve Native American Veterans.

For these reasons and many more, I ask you to support the H.R. 2791, the Department of Veterans Affairs Tribal Advisory Committee Act of 2019. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Member of Congress